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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000684

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ML](#)
SUBJECT: FIVE MALIAN SOLDIERS RELEASED FOLLOWING TALKS IN
ALGIERS

REF: A. BAMAKO 00675
[1](#)B. BAMAKO 00463

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: On July 23 the Malian Government released a statement signed by Minister of Territorial Administration, General Kafougouna Kone, regarding recently concluded talks with Tuareg rebels in Algiers. A rough translation of the statement is included below. On July 28 a group of Tuareg rebels reportedly aligned with Merzouk ag Acherif and Hamma Moussa handed five captured members of the Malian military over to a Malian army unit in Tessalit. These soldiers were likely among those captured either in Tessalit on July 19 or Abeibara on May 21 (Refs. A and B). End Summary.

Malian Statement On Negotiations in Algiers

2.(U) Begin text of July 23 statement released by the Malian Government following recent negotiations with Tuareg rebel in Algiers:

On the invitation of the Government of the Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic and under its mediation, a delegation representing the Government of the Republic of Mali led by Minister of Territorial Administration and Local Collectivities, Division General Kafougouna Kone, and the Democratic Alliance of May 23 for Change, met on the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st of July 2008 in Algiers to examine the evolution of the situation in the Region of Kidal and conduct a follow-up evaluation of the Algiers Accords of 4 July 2006.

After welcoming Algeria's return as mediator, the two sides reaffirmed:

- their dedication to respecting the territorial integrity and national unity of Mali;
- their determination to find a sustainable and definitive solution to the crisis occurring in the Region of Kidal.

Convinced of the interdependence of development, peace, security and stability, the two sides underlined:

- the relevance and validity of the Algiers Accords;
- the devotion of all Malians to pursuing the consolidation of peace, security and development in the Region.

Following the discussions, it was agreed to:

- liberate all persons detained as soon as possible;
- create conditions for the rapid return of displaced persons;
- undertake the demining of all affected areas.

In addition, it was also decided to determine the circumstances of the deaths of the Officers of the Malian

Armed Forces, Commandant Barka Chiekh and Captain Oumar N'Datou, as well as Imam Mohamed ag Moussa and all other similar cases. The two parties agreed to meet again in the near future in order to evaluate the application of the agreed upon measures and to resume discussions regarding the implementation of all remaining aspects of the Algiers Accords.

End Text.

3.(C) Captain Oumar N'Datou was an Arab Berabiche member of the Malian military who was killed defending the Malian gendarme base in Abeibara against an attack by the Tuareg rebel Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC) on May 21. Tuareg rebels claim that Captain N'Datou was killed by fellow Malian soldiers during the fighting after N'Datou raised the possibility of negotiating with the attacking Tuareg rebels. The Tuareg delegation in Algiers prevailed on the Malians and Algerians to include reference to N'Datou's death alongside mention of the April 10 executions of Barka ag Chiekh and Mohamed ag Moussa in Kidal.

4.(C) Several tacit understandings reportedly reached by the two sides do not appear in the official statement released by the Malian Government. These include an informal, apparently verbal, agreement to liberate the "detainees", including approximately 90 Malian soldiers held by the Tuaregs, by mid-August; and the creation of a 200 member oversight and security "committee" composed of Tuareg rebels and Malian soldiers. A timetable for the liberation of hostages and prisoners was apparently left out of the document because the

BAMAKO 00000684 002 OF 002

Malian and Tuareg delegations were unable to agree on a specific release date. Reference to the proposed 200 person oversight and security committee - which may presage the creation of the special military units outlined by the Algiers Accords - was apparently omitted due to objections raised by Ibrahim Bahanga regarding the composition of the committee.

Five Prisoners Released

5.(U) On July 26 an Algerian newspaper published an interview with Ibrahim Bahanga. During the interview Bahanga said that the Malian and Tuareg sides failed to reach an agreement and that the Malian prisoners, which according to Bahanga now number 92, would not be released any time soon.

6.(C) On July 28 Cheick ag Baye (the Kidal Coordinator of Mali's Agency for Youth Employment) and Acherif ag Mohamed (an advisor to President Amadou Toumani Toure) informed the Embassy that 5 Malian soldiers had been handed over to the Malian army in Tessalit earlier in the morning. According to ag Baye and ag Mohamed, the soldiers were released by Tuareg rebels aligned with Merzouk ag Acherif, Hama Moussa, and Kidal Chamber of Commerce president Abdoussalam ag Assalat. Ag Baye and ag Mohamed thought the liberated soldiers were among those captured by the ADC during the attack on Abeibara on May 21.

Comment: One Small Step Forward

7.(C) Reaction from the Malian government to the talks in Algiers seems to be generally positive. We have not yet been able to speak directly to any members of the ADC delegation now on their way back to Mali from Tamanrasset, but Tuaregs in touch with ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi report that the ADC also found the discussions constructive. The apparent release of five Malian soldiers in Tessalit indicates that some Tuareg rebels believe progress was made in Algiers. News emanating from the Bahanga camp is less encouraging,

however, and the best measure of success for last week's talks may be the number of Malian soldiers still in Tuareg rebel hands come mid-August.

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